

Assembly Bill 331

Request for Premier Resort Area Tax status for Stockholm, Wisconsin

The Premier Resort Area Tax is a local sales tax authorized by the Wisconsin Legislature in 1997 and is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. The tax provides heavily touristed communities additional revenue to promote tourism and to cover infrastructure demands related to high tourist traffic.

The 4 communities that are currently collecting this tax are Bayfield, Wisconsin Dells, Lake Delton, and Eagle River. We ask that the Village of Stockholm be allowed to collect this tax as well.

The Village of Stockholm is located on the wide spot on the Mississippi River known as Lake Pepin. With a year round population of 66 it hosts a large number of vacationers during much of the year. It's small town charm, uniquely beautiful setting and proximity to Minneapolis St Paul and Rochester Minnesota makes it a favorite day trip destination. During peak events we welcome as many as 8 to 10,000 visitors a day.

This influx of visitors puts a strain on our already limited infrastructure. We have no community water or sewer and several of the commercial buildings have no water or sewer of any kind. We are greeted with looks of dismay when we point visitors to the portable toilets that we provide. One of our goals is to provide our visitors with flush toilets and a place to wash their hands.

Other infrastructure needs include: resurfacing the parking lanes along Highway 35; a bridge that needs replacement; and a storm water causeway through town that needs repair.

We work very hard at providing an inviting and fun experience for our visitors but because of our small size and the large number of guests we are severely limited. Tourism is the engine that is creating growth in our community and in our neighboring communities as well. We need your help.

Dear Members of the Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties;

We, the members of the Stockholm Merchants Association, are very pleased that your Committee has agreed to consider Assembly bill 331 which would grant Stockholm, Wisconsin the Premier Resort Area Tax status. The Stockholm Merchants Association and its 30 members support the initiative completely and we are very excited about the opportunities that will be created by your support.

Stockholm has become a major Midwestern destination, drawing tourists heavily from Minnesota, and also from Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Our tiny village has also become a major attraction for a large number of foreign tourists from Scandinavia. This has not happened by chance; with strong support from the Department of Tourism, creative marketing and well choreographed planning among the members of the Association, we have achieved a level of tourism awareness and participation far beyond what could be dreamed of by a tiny village.

Tourism is virtually the only industry in Stockholm and employs more than 70 people in full or part time capacities. 100% of the retail space within the village is in use and our success is fostering growth in the neighboring communities as well. This is quite an exceptional accomplishment from a village of 66 people, the smallest incorporated municipality in Wisconsin, in the smallest county in the state.

Below please find a few of the things that have been said about Stockholm in recent years.

- "Best Fall Drives in the Midwest" *Minnesota Monthly*
- One of 10 Fantastic Towns for Fall Color " *Yahoo Travel*
- "You can tool around town on free blue bikes available for visitors or take advantage of some of the best boutique and antique shopping in the state." *Smarter Travel*
- "One of the Top Five Small Town Getaways" *Midwest Living*
- "Lake Pepin perfection: Fall is the perfect time to explore the bluff-top views, eclectic art galleries, and delicious restaurants along Wisconsin's great river road" *Minneapolis St Paul Magazine*
- "This itty-bitty village is a jewel in the diadem of towns along the Great River Road." *Wisconsin Trails*
- "Some of the best scenery and shopping this side of the Mall of America" *Budget Travel*
- "Stockholm is the belle of the ball. I look forward to getting to Stockholm all year." *Lavender Magazine*

As Stockholm has grown in stature as a destination, so have the demands on our tiny village grown. The Premier Resort Area Tax designation would create a means for our village to wisely build on its success and keep tourism as a vibrant, viable economic engine for the region.

Sincerely, Kathleen Burk

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STOCKHOLM, WISCONSIN, USA

POPULATION: 66

TOTAL REVENUE: \$67,809 IN 2011

TYPES OF BUSINESS: ART GALLERIES, ANTIQUE STORES, CAFES, BOOKSTORES AND OTHER VARIOUS BOUTIQUES. THERE ARE 30 BUSINESSES IN THE VILLAGE AND ALL AVAILABLE STRUCTURES IN THE BUSINESS DISTRICT ARE IN USE.

NOTE: STOCKHOLM HAS NO BUSINESSES WHICH PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES, SUCH AS, GAS STATIONS, GROCERY STORES, BANKS, LAUNDRY, ETC. ALL THE DOLLARS SPENT IN THE VILLAGE ARE FOR NON-ESSENTIAL DISCRETIONARY ITEMS.

PEOPLE WHO VISIT:

APPROXIMATELY 75% OF ALL THE DOLLARS SPENT IN THE VILLAGE COME FROM RESIDENTS OF MINNESOTA, PRIMARILY THE TWIN CITIES. WE OFFER HOSPITALITY TO BETWEEN 1,000 AND 5,000 PEOPLE PER DAY, DEPENDING ON DAY OF THE WEEK AND TIME OF YEAR.

CONCERNS:

TOURISM IS RISING DRAMATICALLY EACH YEAR, DESPITE THE ECONOMY. OUR VILLAGE PARK, ROADS, SIDEWALKS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE ARE HEAVILY USED AND THE AMOUNT OF REFUSE GENERATED BY VISITORS IS CONSIDERABLE. WE DO NOT HAVE PUBLIC WATER OR SEWER. WE HOPE TO BUILD A PUBLIC RESTROOM AND REPLACE THE SATELLITE TOILETS (2) THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR UNDERTAKING FOR OUR LITTLE VILLAGE.